

Fall 1993

LVI

MEASURE



Literary Magazine

**The Fall 1993 Issue of Measure
is Dedicated to the memory of
Dr. David Osterfeld**

"Do you want to get a cup of coffee?" If I had a dollar for every time David asked me that, I would be a fairly rich man. Students would often see us walk across campus to get our coffee, and I'm sure they often wondered, "Do those guys do anything but drink coffee?" Believe me, we did a lot more than drink coffee. As we walked across campus we would talk!

We would talk about the people we loved. He would talk about Emmy, Michael and Sarah, and other members of the family he so loved. I would talk about Jody and my family in Wales. We would also talk about our students, and about how proud we were of their successes. We would talk politics, and politely disagree with each other about the merits of government involvement in a particular area of our lives. We would talk about the latest amusing column in the Rensselaer Republican. We would talk about baseball. Dave would talk about his beloved Cincinnati Reds. He would talk about visiting Crossly Field when he was young. He would tell me why Pete Rose should be elected to baseball's Hall of Fame. I would simply nod my head in agreement, and talk about the mighty St. Louis Cardinals. The final thing that I can remember talking about on our walks was music. I love Bach, Beethoven, and Schumann. Dave loved the Beach Boys. Oh, how he loved the Beach Boys! Emmy told me only a few days ago that David probably owned every record the Beach Boys ever made.

If I only had a dollar for every time I heard "Good Vibrations" emanating from his office, I'd also be a relatively rich man. He told me he had 19 versions of the song.

A few days ago, the Lafayette Journal and Courier in an article about David, wrote that he unsuccessfully ran for Congress in the 1980's. The writer of that article obviously didn't know David very well. David, a candidate for the Libertarian Party, ran as a matter of principle. David wasn't concerned about winning or losing that election. David's disappointment at his electoral performance came weeks, if not months, after the election.

After every election, Congressional Quarterly publishes a summary of the results of the election. David, some of you will remember, received just over a thousand votes, approximately .5% of the votes cast. Under normal circumstances, this total would have been rounded up to indicate that the candidate received 1% of the vote. On this occasion, it was rounded downwards indicating that Dave received 0% of the vote. He always mentioned that when he talked about the election. Whenever he mentioned it, however, he smiled.

Dave Osterfeld was much more than a companion who drank coffee with me however. Dave was "the best and brightest" that Saint Joseph's College has ever produced. He was a man of extraordinary intellect, who was the author of a congeries of articles and Op-Ed opinions which were reprinted in a multitude of languages. He was also the author of a monograph, and of two books. His books, Freedom, Society and the State: An Investigation into the Possibility of Society Without Government, and Prosperity versus Planning: How Government Stifles Economic Growth were perceptive and brilliant pieces. In that sense they were very much like David himself.

David was also a gifted teacher. Never given to theatrics, David contributed to the development of some of the finest students this college has ever produced. Whether through the power of his intellect or through some of the most awful jokes ever heard (I especially remember the one about John Locke), he would quietly engage his students in a discussion about Political Science...in a discussion about life.

Dave Osterfeld was feted by academics at some of the great universities and research institutes in this country. His reputation moreover, was not just national but international. He won every prize that Saint Joseph's College awards to members of its faculty. He was consulted by members of both the House and Senate. To those of us who knew him well however, he was just Dave. You could often find him cheering on Saint Joseph's basketball teams from the stands. He often remarked that 2/5's of the starting line-up of the women's basketball team were Political Scientists. On the day before he died he stood in the rain for two hours watching Michael and Sarah play soccer. On the day of his death, he was in his office working and listening to the very best of Chuck Berry.

As Bill Brennan said on the passing of Thurgood Marshall, "I will miss him terribly." I know that we will all miss Dave "terribly."

Peter Watkins

MEASURE

is the literary magazine of the students and staff of
Saint Joseph's College,
Rensselaer, Indiana.

Volume LVI
Fall 1993

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Fall 1993

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Eyes

Geri Panozzo

They see the world and focus on life,
dark blue, green, brown and even light.

They may look sad or fill with tears,
they show emotion and inner fears.

They flirt and dance with another pair,
just look in them and you will see they care.

They show so much without a word,
the signs and messages are sometimes blurred.

They like to stare and read your mind,
words can be exchanged but you will always find,

There is only one pair that feel what you do,
the bright eyes that say, "I love you."

We Call This Friendship

Becky F.

You welcome me
with your warm eyes
and your friendly smile,
welcome me with open arms
and offer me comfort.
and though I don't need
to be comforted,
I tell you a sorrow or two.
You claim you know me well,
and I call you a friend,
but you don't really know
my heart.

You know the parts of me
that I show you,
but you close your eyes
to the rest,
and I don't force them open.
And we talk for a while,
claim to reveal our souls,
but I will forget you when you leave
until I see you again.
And we call this friendship.

To Robert Frost

Greg Potts

Like you, the poet of Decay-
the eye that caught
the silent changes of the seasons.

You, the ear that heard
the tongues of your fathers
spoken on the woods.

Your stay against the confusion
one step backward.

Like you, I have wandered
through yellow woods.
Have seen paths bend
in the undergrowth.

I, too, have watched birches.
Seen them bend to the left
and to the right.
Heard their soft songs on winds.

In the mists of woods
I have seen elves.

I have sat on cold nights
under the blanket of the
quiet December night
to watch woods fill with snow.

I have heard the same voices
the Rock, the River, the Tree.

I shall assume, poet
what you have assumed....
simply very simply
that nature offers no lessons
only reminders of what we have forgotten
to hold true.

Junkie

Jimmy Lane

Homeless, although I live in my needle.
This vein of blood pulsates beyond any cravings.
Injections of death clear and settle my brain.
Unfortunately my brain is wallowing in a boiling spoon.
What's it doing there?
Let me put it back.
No, the needle is drawing near, it's piercing my reopened
skin.
Ohhh, Yes.

That Fateful Walk--July 7, 1990

Jean Clapp

I stand shaking at the back of the Church,
Wondering.

Did I remember everything?

Will there be enough food?

Did we forget anyone?

AM I DOING THE RIGHT THING??

Thoughts fly at random through my mind,
bumping into one another.

I smile, unseeingly,
at the crowd before me.

I come out of my daze,
looking furtively around.

The hems are straight,
the flowers are centered.

The people are all in place,
nothing can go wrong.

The girls stop and give me a hug,
as they turn and start down the aisle.

The music is calling.

It's my turn.

I pause in the doorway.

The music changes,
and everyone stands.

They're all looking at me.

Evident Charity

Robert Garrity

Lives there within my sullen breast a heart
That beats in tempo with the movement of
The stars? Grows sorrow and regret apart
From contact with the person that I love?

The fabric of society is thin,
And I can tear it with a glance, a frown
Cast thoughtlessly in an attempt to win
Success or fame to wear life's fickle crown.

I have scant opportunity to give
Overt expression to a love divine;
But many are the neighbors that I live
With and whose fate is woven in with mine.

Though I am bid to love my fellow man,
My wayward heart rejects it when it can.

Conformity

Michael Sullivan

The world has lost its morals.
We need a new revival.
Don't you know the ten commandments
Are rules for group survival!?
We all are playing God.
It's not our right to give
The doctors, priests, or government
The choice of who should live.
Our raging fear of hell
Was instilled in us at birth,
But as we grow we seem to find
That hell is here on earth.
It's time to clean our lives,
And give the world a bath,
Or every living creature
Will feel the ending wrath.
You shall not kill, You shall not steal,
Do not covet thy neighbor's wife.
These rules are a very small price to pay
To lead a happy life.

In My Father's House

Ryan Wright

In my father's house, The sun could never shine
Choked of hope-We learned to cope, With worlds void
of time

And ancient games-Still were played, Just like the day
before

Because in my father's house, The sun could shine no
more

In my father's house, The music had all died
Instruments unstrung-The silence hung, Laced with
suicide

And children's songs-Long forgot and gone, Were never
found again

Because in my father's house, Childhood was a sin

The tongue is stronger than leather
And teaches lessons better
Spare the rod, Spoil the child
Break their spirit, Before they're wild

The king's been killed, Throne turned to dust
Blood spilled black, Burnt with lust
We sing

In my father's house, The sun could never shine
And every night-I pray to God, Please don't let that house
be mine

Until the Sidewalk Ends

Amy Lynne Ceader, '88

We have traveled many paths
in our time together.
You grew up
and moved away.

Letters used to come
So often that
I knew what you were
thinking before you thought it.

I used to enjoy our
walks down the old sidewalk
that led to the edge of town.
ambling in the sunshine,
Blowing bubbles with
pink wads of bubblegum.
Our feet keeping cadence
with juicy bits of gossip.

My feet would always
throb halfway.
And I would have to take
off my sneakers.
But we'd keep walking
Until the sidewalk ended.

Whenever I see
that old broken sidewalk,

we'll be together forever.
Until the sidewalk ends.

The Real World

Jennifer Anderson

As I begin the journey into the real world, I wonder what
"real" is.

Is real what I know to be true?
I know very little to be true.
Is real what I feel or am aware of?
I feel everything and am aware of nothing.
Is real what I do not know?
For in that sense, I am beginning a journey.

A journey that starts where ever I choose it to and never
shall it end.

Shades of Grey

Becky F.

Where has my youth gone:
to the moon,
to the moon,
to the heavens,
to the stars
that sometimes shine,
and all that's left
of my sanity
are the last shreds
of paper
that I write upon
to salvage it.
Gone the bliss of ignorance,
gone the life I knew
and simple joys that made me smile,
as I stare at walls
of every imaginable shade of grey,
and nothing
to break the monotony.
One more cigarette butt
added to the pile,
another cup of coffee
has been drunk,
another person screaming
somewhere down the hall,
all adding insult
to the innocence I've lost;
all that I was yesterday

has left me
for the insight of today.

When God Made the Roses

Michael Sullivan

I think, when God made the roses,
he should have sat and thought it through.
Instead of only one flower,
he should have grown from each stem two.
The flowers would then remind us
of the love we often misplace.
Though there are so many faces
there is only one human race.
If the flowers did grow apart
and try to degrade each other,
The stem would always keep each rose
from forgetting they are brothers.

Gravestones

Heather Lonborg

The children are gravestones marking the
places where hopscotch and tetherball were once played

The tree that once served as a hiding place
for hide n' seekers is withered and the grass where
they tumbled, laughing, saying "You're it! You're it!" is
brown

The bedrooms where they giggled after "lights
out" and were shushed by mothers in flowered robes are
abandoned, the drawers vacant

A layer of dust has settled in closets where
colorful Halloween costumes and itchy nightgowns once
hung

But the hate conquered the sweet giggles and
stole the light from wide eyes

Republicans and Democrats and Fascists and
NeoNazis walk the silent paths and nudge each other
and point to the staring gravestones

The children are gravestones where the
president of the National Rifle Association and Lee
Iaccoca make deals with Greenpeace

They shake hands, their diamond rings and
gold Rolexes glittering in the dull, dusty sunlight,
and smile broadly.

Untitled

Sylvia

The shackles of this existence bind me
as they did to brothers of the years before.
How to remove them, how to be free--
How to gain knowledge and stability.
For to be the captain of my own soul,
I would steer it in the wind, letting it forever roam.

Jack Kerouac

Greg Potts

America-
lies-
quiet in the cricket song grasses-

along rain glistened gray roads
under the full moon prairie sky.

America-
sleeps on the worm rot
train station bench
under the embrace of Iowa.

America-
Sings with Jazz.

America-
Swings and Sings
in the red brick alleys.

America-
Runs along over gray
roads endlessly shore to shore.

After traveling thousands of miles-
what was it you found?
Did you find the God you longed for
speaking the Word on the roof of the world?

Did you find the lost cities of gold?
What glittered and flashed before your road weary eyes.
Or did you just grow fat and old
a blessed and beaten man?

Shades of Meaning

Jennifer Anderson

Sky blue
Hope

Fire Engine Red
Life

Mystic yellow
Energy

Stormy gray
Confusion

Family Secrets

Becky F.

I've revealed your secrets,
you can't hide
behind your hands;
the weight of silence
broke me,
and everything came out
like a flood,
destroying the future
our past was creating
that, now, will never be.
I'm sorry.
What a twisted, crumbled,
broken mess of a person
you have become
now that the facade
has disappeared,
I never meant
to be so cruel.
And now this is ended,
all that I have known,
this dependence
that we call love,
but was never love
and was never sure enough
to be depended on;
as much as I wish
for the phoenix
to rise from the ashes,

I know that all of the good
was vacant long ago
and maybe was all imagined
when it thrived.
So now I roll the dice
as in a child's boardgame
to determine my new destination
because I don't know
what else to do,
and I'm confused
and scared
as if I truly was
a child again
and all these years
had not come
and robbed me
of my innocence
and you had not stolen
my emotions
to fill your own needs,
leaving me empty and alone.
And you have the gall
to tell me
I've made a mistake!

Dancing Eyes

Jean Clapp

Dancing eyes remind you of the night,
April 3, 1993.
A night filled with shocks and surprises,
laughter and good times.

As we drive down the road,
the urge for California hits us both;
Do we have to go back?

We head toward campus,
dreading our return.
Only to realize that the magic lives on.

Compliments fly as pictures are taken;
all of us see spots as we smile for the camera.
Old memories intrude as songs are played,
but the magic of the evening creates a memory of its
own.

We go to my room to sit and talk,
Kenny G on the stereo and candles on the table.
You rub my back ever so softly,
sending shivers down my spine.
You kiss me goodnight;
I walk you home.
The night has ended,
only a few hours from dawn.

I lie in bed and think of you,
the smell of tiger lilies filling the room.
The clock says that the night has ended,
but dancing eyes live forever.

Agassi

Steven J. Errington

What's the matter, Andre?
Why have you fallen?
You were so talented,
Thirty pounds ago.
Forehand, backhand, and great speed,
Now obsolete.
The American golden boy
Has wasted his talent.

Still Suns

Ryan Wright

Still suns, Sunday mornings
Her purple mountain's majesty
Photographs, A child laughs
At young strangers, Mom and Dad

And I was told by the keeper of the city
"There's nothing more you can do here, son.
"Why don't you go on home?"

Angels played, For my parade
Sprinkled water upon my brow
Girls danced, The Circumstance
And I see much clearer now

So it was here in the wilderness I heard
"There is nothing left for you to do here, son
"You should really go on home."

Still suns. . .
They never set for me

The Most Beautiful Girl In the World

Michael Sullivan

Something magical happens,
Whenever she is near,
Instead of smiling when she looks
I turn my head in fear.
Way down deep inside
I'm as scared as a little boy.
Words won't come from my mouth,
But my heart screams out with joy.
Every time I see her,
I have to stop and stare.
The things I want to tell her
I'll probably never dare.
Her beautiful eyes,
Flowing hair, and skin like cream.
No man could imagine a girl like this,
Not even in a dream.
Her perfectly sensuous body,
Is what I long to embrace.
Just the thought of being with her
Brings a smile to my face.
I want to tell her how I feel,
But my tongue would become curled.
What do you say when your heart's stolen away
By the most beautiful girl in the world?

A Crandall Park Sunset
The Summer of 1987, August 31

Thomas J. Ryan

The closing of an August sun reminds me....
one last happiness to enjoy.

I follow the narrow path to my contemplative
seclusion.

Under my feet, swords of grass pierce my bare
skin.

The winds weave the aged trees into a tapestry,
creating a perfect square around me.

In the distance, an orange melon sun descends
from the peak of a pastel sky.

In the right rigid corner of my fertile square,
an aimless ballet of squirrels scampers across
the foreground onto a distant tree.

I fall into the cushioning of nature's fertile
floor and ponder the forest's fragrance.

With each new closing comes the warmth of a summer's
freedom.

Vampire

Virve

Lover of evil
Lover of pain
Lover of darkness
 from whence he came
Lover of beauty
Lover of life
Lover of women
Lover of strife
Lover of deception
Lover of Love
Lover of Satan
Lover of Blood.

Attitude

Becky F.

You are what you eat,
or is it what you wear:
the length of your skirt,
the cut of your blouse,
your shoes,
the name and the price tag
you display.
I wonder what it all matters
anyway
when I work behind the counter
and all you see of me
are a uniform
and a smile I'm paid
to wear.
"Attitude under construction,"
I just want everyone
to leave me alone
and not worry about
what I'm trying to convey.
But I guess that
is asking for too much,
and "leave me alone"
is an attitude too.

Roots

Greg Potts

The tree my neighbors
planted when I was just
a small boy
has grown nearly
to the tip of the house.

Its branches sway in new winds
and its roots
grip down into new soil
sucking life from new ground.

I have, like the tree grown
nearly as tall as my father.
My arms reach out
to embrace change.
My legs race faster.
Faster always ahead-faster.

The desire of the tree is to
burrow deeper
so it may climb higher
and leave the ground behind.

In my desire to grow
and leave youth behind
there is a fear that grows
and roots me closer to Home.

There's a Girl I've Never Met Before

Michael Sullivan

There's a girl I've never met before,
A girl like no other kind.
I've danced with her a million time,
In the recesses of my mind.
There's a girl I've never smelled before,
I've thought about her though.
Each time I breathe in a fresh spring day,
Or see newly fallen snow.
There's a girl I've never touched before,
I imagine it so clear.
Silk would probably shy away
Whenever she was near.
There's a girl I've never kissed before,
I know it would be fine.
Her lips look sweet as sugar,
And as rosy pure as wine.
There's a girl I've never met before,
A girl like no other kind.
I'll probably meet her again and again,
in the recesses of my mind.

Cracker Jack

Jean Clapp

Cracker Jack, Cracker Jack.
No one wants Cracker Jack.

Poison prize.
Children die.

Don't touch that;
 you don't know where it's been.
Don't talk to strangers;
 nowhere is safe.

Headlines.
Frustration.
Panic.
Protection.

No more candy.
No more gum.

Children die.
Parents cry.
No one wants Cracker Jack.

Human Nature

Ryan Wright

Slide...down...my...skin...
With hand grenades and razor blades
She screams With urgency
"I'm human! I need-I need-I need."

She was young when she told me this
Barely flowered and broken into her womanhood
Untouched, as of yet, by the thieving hands of men
A girl in love with a boy in love with a girl in love

I taught her how to love herself
How to...shut the door on a room full of broken hearts
Soft...sweet
A boy in love with the idea of a girl

She died with the passing of summer
Autumn is the worst of seasons
Autumn...the season of death

Time ticks by
Years melt from my face
Childhood's gone without a trace
"I'm human. I need."

Crushed Ladybug

Heather Lonborg

Her still form rests upon the ground
Her shell cracked; her wings broken
Her children cried when she did not return
They did not understand
That her importance is subjective
Fragile
Defenseless
Insignificant
Crushed on the sidewalk
Part of her body still stuck to the shoe
The instrument of death
Gone unnoticed or unseen
When she stopped upon the pavement
She can no longer fly away, fly away home.

My Song

Jason Grzegorek

I would like, if I may,
To sing a song of myself.
This disparaged song
will not be long,
For that I am not.
My mind is an open collage
Of Saturday morning cartoons,
For all who desire to study it.
Some say I don't act my age,
But they just don't know
What age I am.

I'm far from the most renowned,
At least at this institution of higher
learning.
I find myself wandering,
Usually not in this part of the world,
To a place where my creations and I
Can run free from that persecution of
others.

My song is heard in many a land.
All who hear it
Never forget it.
I have a heart of gold
That shines for everyone to see.
Some say it is the pot of gold
At the end of the rainbow

Where everyone takes a bit of it.
This is a treasure that is easily
Accessible, and everyone is welcomed to it.

My mental song is always in constant rhythm.
There is never a moment when the
Machine in my head stops.
The thoughts may be considered for
A younger audience,
But that's what makes me me.

The song that I sing is a jovial tune.
It's a strain you may hear played
By the younger generation.
It's a melody that will never die,
At least not until creativity is nullified.
For, like Peter Pan,
I'm the boy who will never grow up.
A bit of imagination will do!

Television God

Michael Sullivan

People are stuck in a choice
of long winding paths, never
sure which one to travel along
to reach the kingdom, always
searching for an answer only to
find words of confusion as the box
stares down and preaches how
much the weeds hate the flowers.
The face of death sometimes looks clear,
almost to the point of recognizable
fate, and with a slow boring motion
the face changes, but the story
remains the same.

Behind a Window

Becky F.

I loose my hair,
cascading to my shoulders
to allow the wind
to tug and play
as it will,
watching the lightning
display
from the porch swing,
and getting only
slightly wet
from the leaking roof.
Thunder shouts
as the rain's rhythm
soothes
and I want
to be a part of it all.
But the rain gets harder
and the wind blows stronger
and I walk into the house
lit by electricity instead
and hide behind a window.

Winter

Greg Potts

These are the dark
Desolate weeks when
Nature in all its barrenness
Equals the stupidity of man.
William Carlos Williams

Some say that Winter is-
A time of darkness.

Fools!
I say-
Winter is nature's golden age.

I do not see brown.

I see a warm blanket woven of gold-
spread out over the frozen ground.

Roots gripping down-
lying dormant- yet alive-
in the sleeping Earth.

Needles fall bronze-
under the feet of swaying pines.

Husks of once green grain-
cut down by the reapers-
shine bright and golden-
in the light of the sun.

Winter is nature's golden age.

Life sleeping yet alive-
 waiting to be reborn-
 green, lush, and fragrant-
 in the warm of spring.

Winter reminds us-
 eternal life lies dormant-
in the frozen ground.

Rain

Virve

Methodically caressing her fields.
 Flooding her in fits of passion.
 Starving her in fits of rage.
 Loving her forever,
 Rain the earth's lover.

Ventriloquist

Steven J. Errington

A wooden extension of my arm
Speaks for me.
I'm not particularly funny,
Yet they laugh.
Everyone knows the trick,
But they pretend not to.
I'm the one with talent,
I'm the one who thinks.
But good old Alex
Gets all the accolades.

Untitled

Sylvia

It soars up overhead
Forever yearning to distant horizon.
As I watch it fly high above
Thoughts and emotions never felt before elude me.
Way up high, above the clouds, where no man can see
Way down low, on the distant shore, where no man can
be.
The distance is so great, yet I reach up in anticipation
For I know that in time I will have no destination.

Strength in the Darkness

Jean Clapp

Darkness means peace.

Not tonight.

Darkness means quiet.

Not tonight.

I stand alone in the dark,

listening to the wind,

hearing the howl of a lone wolf in the distance,

feeling the tears on my face.

My body aches;

this is tougher than I thought.

The further I go, the faster I go,

the better.

My body will heal,

the mind takes longer.

One day, I'll look back at this pain

and be glad

That I had the strength to go.

One Thing I'd Want You to Know

Becky F.

If only a tear
meant more than that,
meant more
than that I was crying,
if only it could capture
the feelings I want to convey,
because words
are never appropriate
and often pitiful.
I feel I could cry an ocean,
and in my frustration,
an ocean more,
and still I'd never know
if you understand,
and I shouldn't expect
that you'd even want to.
But sometimes tears
are my only means of expression,
the only thing
that feels right,
and if nothing else I say
means anything to you,
that's one thing
I'd want you to know.

Once Upon the Night

Ryan Wright

Sunlight slides, Escapes the sky
Leaves lovers holding hands
Your face-Your hair, Shoulders bare
Tingles turn demands
Moonlight shine, On skin divine
Hearts quicken with each kiss
Vows whispered clear, In burning ear
Forever, dear, Like this

I look into your eyes, Desire set alight
Come to me, my love...
Once upon the night

The world 'round, It slows and stops
It ceases to exist
Your arms-Your eyes, Lips and thighs
Sanctuaries of bliss
Hot skin drips silk, Fingertips caress
Body breathes its love
Songs composed, Of mortals told
Make love-Slow love-Make love

I look into your eyes, Hungry passion free and bright
Come to me, my love...
Once upon the night
Make love-Slow love-Make love with me...
Once upon the night

Enlightenment

Michael Sullivan

On my back I lie in the grass
and feel universal power.
It's like the dawning of a day,
or the blooming of a flower.
Life opens up and pulls me in
for a minute, an hour, a day.
I see things in a clearer light
Why don't I always see this way?
It's like a giant water spout,
and everything pours true.
I dance with green, I walk with red
I have a chat with blue.
The connection that I feel
has lifted human haze.
Everything has come together,
the walls lifted from the maze.
There's joy in everything you say,
and everything I do.
Just for a while there is just us
There is no me and you.

My Gal

Geri Panozzo

Dedicated to Grandpa Blackstone

There is a special person in everyone's life
that gives bear hugs and teaches what's right.

His build is big, but he's not too strong,
his drollery and wisdom prove he's never wrong.

He spoiled me rotten with cookies and cake,
taught me that I should give more than I take.

He has a special scent that I will always know,
a laugh and smile that helped me grow.

His expressions were soft and his love was so great,
he always taught to love and never to hate.

This man is my grandpa who went his own way,
but still walks me through life from day to day.

He guides my soul so that I know what's right for me,
I truly believe it is me he can see.

The best part was that I was his pal,
Like grandpa always said, "That's my gal!"

The Farm

Peter A. Keiser, '71

He looked across the field where the water had been three feet deep. Now there was only a few ponds and puddles and thin sheets of ice that held the long, brown grass down and reminded him of the dried flowers squashed between the two panes of glass in his grandmother's coffee table. That table had been her favorite and one of the few pieces she had taken with her to Florida, far from the farm where Dan now stood and watched the flood waters slowly recede on that cold, grey February afternoon. He felt the uneasiness of her presence as he took a tour of inspection around the old farm house which was built on four foot stilts to protect it from minor floods which used to occur two or three times a year; he found no signs of damage, just a few piles of old wood and debris left by the river as it returned to its banks. It had been twenty years since the state had dammed up the little river that ran along one side of the farm to make a lake a few miles up stream, and Dan thought it was almost that long since he had seen the last flood. But with the melting snows and heavy rains of January, it was predictable that the lake would hold all the water it could and cause the state to open the dam and flood the lowlands below.

As Dan came around the side of the house, slipping on the brick walk between the house and the dead grass of the lawn, he could see that the door to the fruit cellar, built on the small rise behind the house, had been forced open and was swinging slightly in the breeze. He skated across the thin ice and looked in but all he could see were the murky flood waters still trapped in the cellar. There had been nothing in the old fruit cellar for years except old decaying shelves and snakes, so there was nothing in the old fruit cellar of value to tempt someone to break in. "Must be kids," Dan muttered to no one.

Standing there trying to relock the door, his hands shaking with cold and hurry, Dan could hear the crusty voice of his grandmother in his head and that burning feeling of guilt in his stomach.

"Danny, I left you the farm because I thought you had enough sense to take care of it, but now I wonder."

Even now Dan shivered at the memory of his grandmother's bluntness, causing his hands to shake even more. Of his grandmother's two children, Dan's uncle, Ed, had spent the majority of his life in and out

of mental hospitals and halfway houses , and Dan's mother ran off with Dan's father at sixteen, against her mother's wishes. Her common sense would not allow her to leave it to Dan's mother. Dan being the only grandchild was then the likely heir.

"Danny boy, that you?" Dan recognized the voice of Mr. Hedges, his grandmother's neighbor and long-time friend. The old man was slipping and sliding his way along the walk made treacherous by the moss and moisture, and patches of ice.

"Careful Mr. Hedges. Walk over in the grass where it's not so slippery."

"Danny, your grandmother would kill me for walkin' on her fine lawn. Someone break into the fruit cellar?" Mr. Hedges asked as he saw Dan trying to secure the door in some way.

"Yeah, I think it was the kids. There was nothing down there and it looks like the main house hasn't been disturbed. My son, Matt, is supposed to be checking on the place once a week, but I think he just uses it as an excuse to borrow the car. Hell, I doubt if he even gets out and walks around the house."

"Well, leave it be. I'll come back tomorrow and put a new padlock on it for you. I think I got a fairly good one in my shed."

"Flood do much damage around your place?" Dan asked as he helped the old man along the walk to the front of the house.

"Nah, my son took my tractor on his flatbed up to his house and he wanted me to go too, but I've been through many of these little floods. I told him me and Jack Daniels would just go up to the second floor if it got bad," the old man chuckled. Dan remembered how Mr. Hedges and his grandmother would sit on her porch in the sunset for hours, sipping straight whiskey, talking about the good old days and farming. His grandmother did not care so much for the drink as the company in the long summer twilight just before darkness.

"Haven't much use for that tractor anyhow now that I sold that last ten acres to the sod farm," the old man continued. "What with all the new housing up there," the old man pointed to the housing developments on the hill, "there's more money in sod and nurseries than corn and vegetables. All I got left is an acre or so around the house and most of that is trees and gardens, not much grass to keep the old John Deere. Your grandmother's place's about the biggest parcel left around here, isn't it?"

"Just about. The Applegates lease most of it to grow sweet corn for their produce market. They've approached me a couple of times to buy

the place, house and land and all, but Grandma never cared much for Henry Applegate. I know she'd haunt me from the grave for sure if I did that." Both men laughed remembering how opinionated the old woman was.

Mr. Hedges leaned back on his Oldsmobile which was splattered with mud from the potholes in the gravel road. "I remember when old Henry Applegate was selling just a few ears of corn and some tired lookin' tomatoes out of a shed by the road. Now his sons are peddling fruits and vegetables, candy, ice cream, homemade crafts and God knows what else. Why, I've seen whole grocery stores smaller than that place they got now."

"John Applegate was a hard worker," Dan said. I remember when we were in school together and he always said he was going to make his dad's farm profitable again. Hell, I work my ass off at the paper while old Johnny is in Florida for three months."

"You still a reporter, Danny? Haven't seen your name on any articles in the Journal lately."

"Not any more. I wasn't very good at it. They made me business manager, selling ads and stuff. Actually, I like the job a lot, but with a community paper the pay isn't great. Betsy gone back to teaching now that the kids are older, and with her salary we're doing okay. Lately though, she's been pushing me to sell this place for a college fund for the kids." A furrow formed on Dan's forehead and his stomach burned with the idea of going against his grandmother. "But I'm not sure that's what Grandma wanted me to do with it. She was so proud she never sold out."

"Your grandmother was also real proud of those kids of yours. You ask me, I think she'd be tickled that you used the farm to pay for their schooling."

"I don't know," Dan said, hearing the old woman's disappointment from her grave. "She would skin me like one of those rabbits she'd shoot from the back porch."

Both men smiled, each with his own memory. Mr. Hedges shivered, partly from the cold and partly from thinking of the dead. "Danny, it's too damp out here for my bones, why don't you follow me over to my place and join me in a little of old Jack D. The water's down far enough that the road's clear."

"Okay, let me check inside and I'll be over in a few minutes."

Dan crossed the front porch as his grandmother's neighbor backed his car around and pulled slowly down the lane. He had often wondered if Hedges and his grandmother had been more than good friends after

both were widowed, but the idea of his grandmother in bed with anyone was more than he could picture in his head.

Dan unlocked the front door and stepped inside the old farmhouse. Although it was cold out, it was even colder inside, with a dampness that sent an instant chill through Dan's body. He always felt sad going into the place in the winter. It had always been such a warm and inviting place when his grandmother lived there. But now it was cold and barren and gray like winter itself. He and Betsy had taken all the good furniture out after his grandmother went to Florida lest it rot in the dampness. Now there were only a few tired old pieces here and there. Dan walked through the place checking windows and the side door to make sure all was secure. He had pulled the pump from the well and drained the plumbing in the fall, but still he looked at all the pipes to make sure none had split from a trapped drop of water that froze. Dan now hurried with his inspection since his body ached with cold and his heart ached with memories. Even though the electricity was turned off, Dan checked twice to make sure everything was off. Leaving the house, he went up to the front door three times to make sure it was indeed locked, and once in his car he fought the temptation off to check the door one more time. Although the farm had been left to him outright, he still felt its custodian with the critical presence of his grandmother looming somewhere behind him as he drove down the lane.

"Come in, Danny, my boy," Mr. Hedges greeted, his cheeks rosy from the cold and his breath fresh with the scent of Tennessee whiskey. "I got just the thing to take the chill off."

Dan took his coat off, the old man's house glowed with the light from the lamps and the heat from the fire and the propane furnace in the kitchen. There was the faint odor of roast in the oven.

"This reminds me so much of Grandma's house, especially on Sundays when we'd come for dinner." Dan took a deep breath through his nose and smiled at the old man.

"My son and his family are coming for supper. I told him I'd cook the meat if they'd bring the trimmings," Mr. Hedges said, offering Dan a glass with a healthy shot of liquor.

Dan took the glass and downed the drink in one gulp. He was not much of a drinker, but he loved the sudden rush of the shooter, burning his mouth and throat until they numbed the warm feeling in the pit of his stomach where the whiskey settled. His host poured him another, but this one Dan sipped as they settled by the fire. Dan felt warm and relaxed as the chill of his grandmother's house slowly faded.

"Danny, why are you hanging on to that place; your grandmother's been dead over a year now. You and Betsy don't have the time for the upkeep. That house needs major work to keep it from crumbling into the river, and your boys have better things to do than cutting the grass and tending the gardens no one but the rabbits and the squirrels see. You and I both know the Applegates would give you a fair price on the place."

Dan was about to quip again about his grandmother's determination not to sell out, but instead he took another sip of whiskey and gazed into the fireplace. He knew Mr. Hedges was right.

The two men sat there a while longer by the warmth of the fire, talking about the winter and if the river would rise again, and some of the old neighbors that they both remember when there were half a dozen farms on the flood plain where only Hedges' and Dan's grandmother remained.

"I told my son to sell this place when I'm gone," Mr. Hedges said as he poured himself a little more whiskey. "No sense tryin' to keep alive something that's been dead for years. When your grandmother and I were young, time moved in a lazy kind of way and change came on very slowly. Nowadays, things are changing every day, hell, sometimes every minute. Nothing remains as it were. That was a lesson your grandmother refused to learn."

"But she expected me to keep the farm as it was when she moved to Florida so she could come back every summer and sit on her porch and drink whiskey with you. Just because she is dead I have a hard time thinking it's okay to do anything different."

The old man leaned forward in his chair to let the heat from the fire engulf his face already glowing from the drink. "No argument that your grandma was one stubborn, strong-willed woman; but as mean as she could be sometimes, I can't believe she'd haunt anyone from the grave, lest they want to be haunted."

Dan's head snapped around as though the old man's last words had been the crack of a rifle, and he looked into Mr. Hedges eyes which were clear and steady in spite of the liquor. Dan felt very uneasy sitting by the fire that now made him uncomfortably warm. "Well, you got company coming and I better get on home myself."

Dan got up to put his coat on, his head a little fuzzy from the drink and the heat. Mr. Hedges opened the door and allowed the damp chill to seep back into the hallway. "Danny, that farm held a lot of dreams for your grandmother, no reason your dreams can't be different."

"Well, you might be right," Dan said as he made his way across the porch and down the steps to his car. He made a final wave of thanks as he got behind the wheel and started down the lane. It was getting late and there was an icy mist on the windshield as the fog rolled in from the river. Through the cold, gray haze he could see his grandmother's house dark and empty, the roof sagging a little more than he had remembered, making the weather vane lean off center. Cracking the window to release the fog from inside his car, he thought he heard the fruit cellar door creaking back and forth. It's only an old house, he thought as the burning in his stomach moved up to his chest. He told himself it was the whiskey on an empty stomach, but he knew it was his grandmother's ghost rumbling around in his gut.

Reality is Endangered

Michael Sullivan

Reality

My escape from it has become a fight for it
Visions appear and colors dance
The sun and moon have a true romance
The moon is a woman and the sun is a man
Like the ocean's tides she comes and goes
Like the life giving light he sometimes glows
Is that there or is it just me?
The escape I have found is in my mind
The longer I go the more I'll unwind
This brief moment in time is always good
The escape from my life is the plan
Forgetting tomorrow I'll wake up the same man.

Father

Greg Potts

Upon your hands-
your history is written.

The creaks on your clay colored hands-
wind endlessly like dried rivers.

Your knuckles knotted and knobbed-
by years of toil.

Hands- as a boy, skin torn open-
on shovel handles- tractor wheels- barbed wire.
Blood that dripped from open wounds-
fertilized dried ground.

Hands- that fashioned hook-
and climbed poles high in bitter January winds.
Winds that beat creases in the face-
of a smiling soft skinned boy on a black and white
high school photograph.

Hands- that rebuilt engines.

Hands- and planted harvested gardens.

Hands- that built sheds.

Hands- that held small children.

Hands- that fixed broken chairs-
careless clumsy children broke.

I- remember- your rough hands on my hands-
when you taught me to grip a ball bat.

I have taken much, from you Father.

Your blood flows-
in the rivers of my veins-

I have taken your walk.
When shadows fall on my face-
there is your face etched skillfully by the hand of God.
I have taken your wit-
and for better or worse your temperament.

Unlike you, I can not create history with my hands.
My hands are soft-
because yours are hard.
You toiled in hot sun-
so I would not have to.
I- have taken much from you father-
and I am glad.
Sadly though-
I can not build history with my hands.
I can only hope to preserve your history-
on this page.

Trap

Virve

Encased in my feelings
Afraid to reveal
The things I think about the things I feel.
"It's not ladylike," is what they say.
But, I will despite you feel this way.

Soul Mates

Jean Clapp

You stand alone,
 guarded by the night.
They watch over you,
 keeping you from harm.
You stand among them,
 one of them,
 part of them.
The form is different,
 the spirit is the same.

I walk slowly toward you,
 not knowing what to say.
You stop and look at me;
 the sadness haunts your eyes.

Why do they know me?
I don't understand.

I turn to you to ask the questions,
 and suddenly I know.
We were always meant to be--
 best friends,
 soul mates.

The Tupperware Party

Becky F.

"Did you hear about So-and-so
and So-and-so
and their little boy
who live just down the street..."

"Or how about the Smithson boy,
discharged from the service--
everybody knew that he was gay..."

"My neighbors have been
out of town

and their sixteen-year-old
has parties every night..."

"They say Susie What's-her-name
died of a cocaine
overdose..."

"I know that my son
would never do that..."

"My little girl's a perfect
angel..."

"I hear your daughter's pregnant--
when's she due..."

And all of them
will turn their backs
and talk about the others
at the next party
they attend--

I think

I'll go buy Rubbermaid
instead.

My Flag Flies Many Colors

Michael Sullivan

Are you ready to go?
I don't know
What time is it?
It's time to forget the face and see
the soul
You might remember what it looks like
It has always been there
hiding, sometimes floating in the breeze
waiting
for the right person to reach out and recognize it
Far beyond the right to know we look
for the one to point the way
being driven through a fast-paced game
always wondering
Who's going to reach the end first and win
or is he the loser?
Standing in a crossed maze
choosing which color will look best
to fly over the others
Yellow over blue or blue over yellow
but together don't they make green?
A mother always scolds her child and warns
instead of comforting and teaching
If we start at the beginning will the end
be all right??
My flag flies many colors
Not in any particular order
but all mixed together

A Special Thanks to :

Hardee's of Rensselaer

Southside Package Store

Cover by Sharon M. Vairo and Stephen R. James 1991